

50 THINGS TO DO TO OVERTURN COLORADO AMENDMENT 2 AND TO STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS, AND GAY & LESBIAN EQUAL RIGHTS IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

Take Positive Action/ Don't Boycott

- -----You will notice that on this list, the suggestion of boycott is missing. That is because Colorado Authors for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights is made up of many "old hands" at civil rights who understand both parry and backlash. Further, we do not recognize state lines on this issue of Amendment 2. It is NOT any one state's issue; it is a national issue of broad proportions and deep concerns. We strongly believe a call for scattershot boycott -- cultural, economic or otherwise -- is confusing and counter-productive. Though we understand the sentiment, we question the means. A boycott here, unless very carefully aimed and compassionately executed, hurts many innocent individuals, in particular minority groups -- among them, Latinas, blacks and poor whites -- and other marginalized and disempowered groups, such as the mentally ill, and the homeless. Scattershot boycott also harms many businesses that support gay/ lesbian rights and humans rights, and causes backlash among the very people who were supportive to begin with. So, we discourage scattershot and unnecessarily divisive interventions. Whereas boycott is passive exclusion, we are suggesting far more dynamic pro-active measures. Let us be a network of concerned individuals who act on each other's behalf and on our shared welfare. Let us stand as people who do not consider any group of people expendable.

Here's a list of approaches you can take instead of scattershot boycott. These involve varying degrees of risk. Weigh what you can do, and do what you can. Our acts of education, reaching out, and standing up form the basis for a new paradigm wherein all people can live and let live.

Psychic Support

- If you are gay or lesbian, or parents of a gay or lesbian person, come out to your family, friends and co-workers. We cannot be silent.
- If you are straight, come out to your family, friends and co-workers that you support equal rights for all people including gays and lesbians. State that you espouse the world view of human rights for all people. We cannot be silent.
- Make sure the employee policy where you work states that your company does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. We need to point out businesses that do not support gay and lesbian equal rights, and only work for companies who do. If you work for a company that discriminates, plan your exit.
- If you are an artist, create work for or about this issue. If you are a dancer, make a dance. If you are a religious person, make a shrine or *ofrenda*, if you are a writer, write about this, if you are a poet, make poems about this. There is a need for art that penetrates the issues and cuts to the bone. We cannot emphasize enough that there is a need for public grieving and healing rituals. The windows are endless for speaking out on this issue in constructive and creative ways.
- Refuse to let people rhetorically separate gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gender and straight people from one another. We are a family.

Politicos

- Help people understand that protecting gays and lesbians against discrimination is not granting them "special rights." (This was one of the most confusing parts of the passage of Amendment #2. Voters thought that by protecting lesbians and gays against

discrimination, they were also granting them special privileges, such as affirmative action status and quotas. This was a tragic misunderstanding.)

- Write to your representatives in Washington D.C. urging that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 be amended to include *sexual orientation* in the list of protected groups.
- Do that semi-tedious job you have been promising yourself you'd do forever. Post the names, phone numbers and addresses of your federal, state and city council members next to your phone. Some numbers: White House (202) 456-1111, Congress (202) 224 3121, Pentagon (703) 555-1212
- Vote in non-voting times. Senators and congress people, city, state and federal, are influenced by cards and phone calls. They are deciding policy "on the spot" based on which way the mail and phone calls go. Begin to understand this as your weekly, or even daily voting duty. On a postcard-size card, type the names of yourself and your family at the bottom, have your family members sign their names. Take this to a Xerox place and have them duplicate as many as you like; we recommend no less than 100. Put stamps on them all in advance. Keep them next to where you read the newspaper or watch television news. Send out at least ten a week (like good hygiene) with a sentence saying "We support ..." or "We do not support ..." whatever it is you would like to have a voice in. Do this at least until all 100 cards are all gone. Then make 100 more. • If you work or have a place of business in a district different than your home district, know and stay in touch with the council persons, senators and congress people in that district also.

Communications Support

- Wear a button that has a pink triangle or the "equal" sign, regardless of your sexual orientation. • Put "HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST" and/or "ALL HUMANS WELCOME HERE" signs in your window, on your car, at your place of business.

Activism

- Do not let people say things against others without speaking up yourself. You need not be harsh. Just say, "I don't feel that way." Or "I think it's important that there are equal rights for everyone." Or, "I feel all should be given respect."
- Speak out against dehumanizing tactics of organizations that wish to marginalize, denigrate or deny individuals equal rights. • Plan and participate in national, state and local marches, rallies and public gatherings that promote human rights for all people.
- Organize in your state NOW. Do not let the angry lead unless they are very level-headed. Do NOT wait until an initiative attempting to restrict human rights is placed on the state or city ballot. Do not go to sleep. Stay awake.
- Learn to deal with negative stories. Some people will say they have been injured in the past by a person of the oppressed group, etc. Sympathize, but remind the person that failures in human nature run across all ethnic and gender groups.
- Wherever possible, refuse splitting, "us against them."
- Inquire of your own state or city legislature and make sure they are not boycotting Colorado; give the people of Colorado time to work it out.
- Don't let anyone tell you are wrong, unsympathetic, etc., if you do not join a divisive boycott or tactics that are deleterious to disempowered groups and minorities.
- Encourage people from your state to come here and stand up here, create art here, donate money here, nourish hope here. We know what the issues are. We need the sustenance. The American Bookseller Assoc. Children's Books convention came here recently, issued a statement to the press condemning amendment 2, became an amicus to the lawsuit to overturn amendment 2, and gave \$10,000 to the fight to overturn amendment 2. This is activism at its best. A group of performance poets came here in their burned-out car all the way from Oklahoma to give a poetry reading on human rights. This is activism at its best. People from all over the nation are beginning to send letters of

encouragement, and donations in various amounts. This is activism at its best. A local press devotes all issues to activist art on amendment 2. Street theater is on the rise. Nationally known people are traveling here to perform and help. We bless them. These are human rights activists at their best.

- Encourage people that alternatives exist that are positive and that help. Discourage persons from calling any state, the "hate state." This tars tens of thousands of good and decent people, thereby creating destructive backlash. Discourage the use of name-calling in general. We have heard people in their righteous anger call groups "Christo-fascists," for instance. This is not useful. It impugns the God of many good people. Call people by their given names, and groups by the names they call themselves.
- Contact the owners of your local independent book dealers to see what they think can help. Because the majority of booksellers fully espouse freedoms for all people, they are generally an incredible resource. Powells in Portland, The Tattered Cover, and The Book Garden in Denver, for instance, have both been very vocal about preserving the rights of gays and lesbians, and ALL people.
- Very soon, anti-rights groups will be holding meetings in your community about "combating homosexual demands..." or some such wording. Attend these meetings as a group. Speak out peacefully and passionately when you have the opportunity.
- Form systems, coalitions and groups NOW to combat any future inhumane legislative and constitutional initiatives that may be placed on your state ballots. You must be as organized as your opposition. For instance:
- Form a Non-Discrimination Organization whose goal is changing the system through education, outreach, advocacy, and positive Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual visibility and action. Develop working groups and contacts, such as: Education, Media Watchdog/Rapid Response, Fundraising, Coalition Building, Conflict/Resolution curriculum in schools, etc.
- Form an Anti-Defamation League that responds to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender related media items, both positive and negative. Create a volunteer staff to monitor, respond to, and work with media, especially in rural and isolated areas.
- Develop a Recorded Message Event Line that gives out information on group meetings, events, phone numbers, coalitions, so that the entire community can stay informed.

Events

- Sponsor a discussion about homophobia in your community. Regardless of whether you are gay or straight, question and examine your own homophobia and your own straight-phobia. • Begin a discussion group series within your own community. Invite people of all orientations. Have a facilitator. Lay ground rules for respect and then proceed to discuss long-held beliefs of all people. Choose one subject per meeting. A local discussion group airs differences, lets people see leading people in the community who are not afraid to be openly associated with, not afraid to stand up for gay or lesbian folks. This builds communication and relationship. The majority of people who accept gay /lesbian parity are those who have known someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual.
- Have sing-outs, dance-outs, paint-outs, write-outs etc. Recently, a local group of 90 lesbian singers, along with a performance poet, went to Colorado Springs and gave a free concert in order to claim psychic territory there, to put a blessing on the city, and to give support to the g/l community working for human rights there. It was a phenomenal success, leaving behind a legacy of strength and beauty.

Young People Support

- Sponsor a curriculum in your local high school that enables counselors and teachers to lead a series of discussion groups on homophobia in the schools. Curriculum is currently being used at several high schools to help generate discussion among students about gay and lesbian people and provides support for teenagers who may be questioning their

own sexual orientation. The cost of the printed materials is \$100. Purchase and donate these to your local high school. For more information, contact Edelle Corrine at the Rocky Mountain Peace Center, 1520 Euclid Ave., Boulder, CO 80302. 303-449-6981.

- As library revenues have decreased dramatically, donate books on coming out, helping parents to understand their gay children, speaking up for their gay children, etc., to your local library. Visit the library and see that the books are accessible.
- Set up telephone rap-lines for teenagers to talk about gayness, lesbianism, their questions about all issues pertaining to these. • Sponsor Conflict/Resolution teaching.
- Visit schools to talk about gay and lesbian lifestyle from a "human rights, equal rights for all" position. Continue to go there to speak. Once is good. Several times is better.

Send/ Subscribe

- Send monthly donations of \$5, \$10, \$20 or more (by check) to C.L.I.P. for the next twelve months. CLIP stands for Colorado Legal Initiatives Project. They are the brilliant and dynamic legal arm which is battling to overturn Amendment 2 on constitutional grounds. To date they have been successful in gaining a temporary block to the law going into effect, which means cities such as Denver, Boulder, Aspen and Telluride, that have equal protection laws on the books, are still empowered. CLIP estimates its ongoing expenses to be about \$20,000 per month. Their staff is composed of all volunteer attorneys, so the money goes directly to the paperwork, copy work, filing of briefs, hiring of expert witnesses and so on. CLIP, Box 4447, Denver, CO 80201. (303) 830-2100.
- Subscribe to the newsletters of groups that are planning anti-gay and anti-lesbian legislation across the nation. Relay the information to the human rights groups in your area.
- Send articles or opinion pieces to the Op-ed pages of your local newspaper. Meet with your public television station to plan gay/lesbian and human rights programming, such as that done by Channel 12 in Denver. Similar to The Lambda Report in Denver, create daily and nightly gay/lesbian news and talk programs on community access cable.
- Send a personal letter of support to "Operation Support." P.O. Box 188, 1015 South Gaylord Street, Denver, Co 80209. They will distribute your letters to organizations in Colorado that are actively working to overturn amendment 2. Guidelines: people already know what the issues are; they will appreciate your nourishment, support and blessings.
- **Please** do not send letters trying to engage us in diatribe or divisive discussion. If however, you propose additions to this list, please write Operation Support, Box 188, 1015 S. Gaylord St. Denver, CO 80209. We are not a clearing house and regret that we cannot answer letters personally, but we are very appreciative of your support.
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